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UTILITY PATENT APPLICATION TRANSMITTAL

(Only for new nonprovisional applications under 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b))

Attorney Docket No. 1322/47

First Inventor or Application Identifier Robert John Tinsley

Title See 1 in Addendum

Express Mail Label No. EK580750667US

APPLICATION ELEMENTS

See MPEP chapter 600 concerning utility patent application contents.

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1. ☒ * Fee Transmittal Form (e.g., PTO/SB/17)
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2. ☒ Specification [Total Pages 43]
(preferred arrangement set forth below)
 - Descriptive title of the invention
 - Cross References to Related Applications
 - Statement Regarding Fed sponsored R & D
 - Reference to Microfiche Appendix
 - Background of the Invention
 - Brief Summary of the Invention
 - Brief Description of the Drawings (if filed)
 - Detailed Description
 - Claim(s)
 - Abstract of the Disclosure
3. ☒ Drawing(s) (35 U.S.C. 113) [Total Sheets 8]
4. Oath or Declaration [Total Pages 3]
 - a. ☒ Newly executed (original or copy)
 - b. ☐ Copy from a prior application (37 C.F.R. § 1.63(d))
(for continuation/divisional with Box 16 completed)
 - i. ☐ DELETION OF INVENTOR(S)
Signed statement attached deleting inventor(s) named in the prior application, see 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.63(d)(2) and 1.33(b).

5. ☐ Microfiche Computer Program (Appendix)
6. Nucleotide and/or Amino Acid Sequence Submission
(if applicable, all necessary)
 - a. ☐ Computer Readable Copy
 - b. ☐ Paper Copy (identical to computer copy)
 - c. ☐ Statement verifying identity of above copies

ACCOMPANYING APPLICATION PARTS

7. ☒ Assignment Papers (cover sheet & document(s))
8. ☐ 37 C.F.R. § 3.73(b) Statement of Power of Attorney
(when there is an assignee)
9. ☐ English Translation Document (if applicable)
10. ☐ Information Disclosure Statement (IDS)/PTO-1449 [Copies of IDS Citations]
11. ☐ Preliminary Amendment
12. ☒ Return Receipt Postcard (MPEP 503)
(Should be specifically itemized)
13. ☐ * Small Entity Statement(s) [Statement filed in prior application Status still proper and desired (PTO/SB/09-12)]
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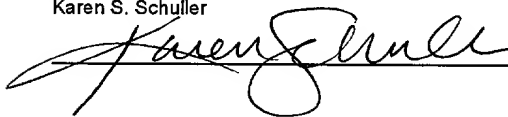
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BOX PATENT APPLICATION
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Re: U.S. Patent Application for METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR PROVIDING MESSAGE TRANSLATION, ACCOUNTING AND ROUTING SERVICE IN A MULTI-PROTOCOL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK ENVIRONMENT
Our File No. 1322/47

Sir:

Please find enclosed the following:

1. A U.S. patent application for METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR PROVIDING MESSAGE TRANSLATION, ACCOUNTING AND ROUTING SERVICE IN A MULTI-PROTOCOL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK ENVIRONMENT (43 pages);
2. Eight (8) sheets of drawings;
3. Executed Declaration (3 pages);
4. Executed Assignment (4 pages);
5. Utility Patent Application Transmittal Form (Form PTO/SB/05, 2 pages);
6. Fee Transmittal Form (Form PTO/SB/17) in duplicate;
7. Recordation Form Cover Sheet (Form PTO-1595, 1 page);

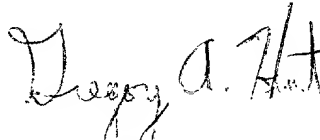
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Page 2

8. A check in the amount of \$1,468.00 to cover the application filing fee and the assignment recordation fee;
9. A return-receipt postcard to be returned to our offices with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office date stamp thereon; and
10. A Certificate of Express Mail No.: EK580750667US.

Please contact our offices if there are any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

JENKINS & WILSON, P.A.



Gregory A. Hunt
Registration No. 41,085

GAH/kss

Enclosures

METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR PROVIDING MESSAGE TRANSLATION,
ACCOUNTING AND ROUTING SERVICE IN A MULTI-PROTOCOL
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK ENVIRONMENT

AN APPLICATION FOR
UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

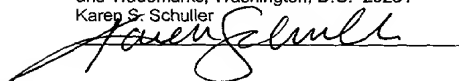
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Description

METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR PROVIDING MESSAGE TRANSLATION,
ACCOUNTING, AND ROUTING SERVICE IN A MULTI-PROTOCOL
COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK ENVIRONMENT

5

Technical Field

The present invention relates to the routing of signaling messages in
a multi-protocol communications networking environment, and more
particularly to methods and systems for providing message accounting
10 services at an internetwork routing node that is also capable of receiving,
translating, and routing signaling messages that utilize a variety of
communication protocols.

Background Art

15 Shown in Figure 1 is a simplified communications network scenario
that includes both a Signaling System 7 (SS7) and a Transmission Control
Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) communications network, generally
indicated by the numeral 100. Network 100 includes both a conventional
voice type calling party 102 and a computer terminal based data type calling
20 party 104. Both calling parties are communicatively coupled to an originating
End Office (EO) or Service Switching Point (SSP) 106. With particular
regard to signaling type communications, SSP 106 is generally connected
via an SS7 network 108 to an SS7 signaling message routing node, Signal

Transfer Point (STP) 110. Coupled to STP 110 is an SS7 message accounting and billing system 114 which is used to track SS7 signaling query messages that are destined for an SS7 database node, Service Control Point (SCP) 112. SCP node 112 might include an 800 number database, a
5 Line Information Database (LIDB), Local Number Portability database (LNP), or other database services typically associated with the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN).

With particular regard to SS7 communication networks and the protocol stack typically employed therein, it will be appreciated that the
10 overall stack can essentially be divided into two segments or layers: a lower level Message Transfer Part (MTP) layer and a higher level signaling application layer. In fact, the MTP layer, as described above, is comprised of three sub-levels that are identified as layers MTP1, MTP2 and MTP3. These three layers generally correspond to the physical, data link, and
15 network levels as defined in the International Standards Organization (ISO) Open System Integration (OSI) protocol standard, and each layer can be configured to operate under one of many layer-specific protocols depending upon the particular network configuration scenario. For instance, the MTP1 layer protocol could be configured as DS0A, V.35, etc. Signaling application
20 layer protocols commonly employed in an SS7 network include Transaction Capabilities Application Part (TCAP)/Signaling Connection Control Part (SCCP), ISDN User Part (ISUP), Telephone User Part (TUP), Mobile Application Part (MAP) and Broadband ISDN User Part (BISUP). With respect to the OSI model mentioned above, these SS7 signaling application
25 protocols essentially correspond to OSI layers 4 through 7, and in some

cases a portion of the OSI layer 3. Such signaling application layer protocols are concerned primarily with facilitating call setup/teardown and various call related services (e.g., toll free service, local number portability, calling name delivery, etc.). In general, it will be appreciated that the lower level MTP
5 layers are concerned with, and responsible for, ensuring reliable transport of a signaling message between applications residing on different SS7 network nodes.

In light of the previous discussion, it will be appreciated that within an SS7 signaling network, SS7 signaling protocol messages are typically
10 transmitted over dedicated communication links that employ an MTP transport protocol suite.

Returning to Figure 1, it will be noted that further connected to SSP **106** is an Internet Service Provider (ISP) **116**, which is also communicatively coupled to an Internet Protocol communications network **118**, such as the
15 Internet. As such, ISP **116** effectively provides a calling party that is served by SSP **106** with access to the Internet **118**. Connected to and generally contained within the Internet "cloud" **118** are a large number of data packet routers, one of which is shown in Figure 1 as router **120**. Further coupled to Internet data router **120** is a database node **122** and a billing system **124**.
20 Database node **122** might include domain name information, presence or status information, or any number of database applications utilized by Internet type service providers or e-commerce type operators. In a manner similar to that described above, billing system **124** is coupled to router **120** so as to generally track messages destined for Internet database node **122**.

With particular regard to IP-based communication networks and the protocol stack typically employed therein, in a manner analogous to that described above for SS7/MTP protocols, it will again be appreciated that the overall stack can essentially be divided into two components: a lower level or
5 suite of transport related protocols and a higher level signaling application related layer. For the case of a Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) / IP based communication network, it will be appreciated that the transport protocol suite, as referred to herein, refers to OSI layers 1 through 3. Consequently, with regard to TCP/IP based communication, OSI layers 4
10 through 7 are referred to herein as the higher level or signaling application related layers. Again, as both the ISO OSI and the SS7/MTP protocol models are well known to those skilled in the art of packet network communications, a detailed description and discussion of the basic OSI and SS7/MTP models is not presented herein. A detailed discussion of the OSI
15 model can be found in *Communications for Cooperating Systems OSI, SNA, and TCP/IP* by R.J. Cypser, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1991. Similarly, a detailed discussion of the SS7/MTP protocol can be found in *Signaling System #7* by Travis Russell, 2nd ed. McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1998.

Given the configuration of network **100**, and the inherent
20 incompatibility of the two communication transport protocol suites (MTP vs. TCP/IP), there is no way that an Internet protocol node can directly or indirectly access a database node in the SS7 component of the network. Similarly, there is no mechanism whereby an SS7 node can access a database node in the IP component of the network.

One solution to the above stated problem is to employ a stand-alone protocol converter node **126** that resides in front of the SS7 SCP node **112** as indicated in Figure 2. Protocol converter node **126** is capable of receiving a TCP/IP based non-SS7 database query message (i.e., a message that employs a non-SS7 signaling application protocol such as session initiation protocol (SIP), H.323, etc.) and translating this message into an SS7/MTP formatted query message that can be processed by SCP **112**. However, as indicated in Figure 2, such a configuration makes the problem of message accounting / billing considerably more complicated, as all query messages destined for SCP **112** do not necessarily pass through STP **110**. Furthermore, such a configuration requires that a network operator install and maintain separate protocol converting nodes, which generally increases network complexity and creates additional OA&M burdens.

What is needed is a system and method of providing a packet routing node that is capable of facilitating communication between networks that employ differing transport level protocols (e.g., MTP vs. TCP/IP) and differing signaling application level protocols (e.g., SS7 vs. SIP). Also needed is the ability for such a multi-protocol routing node to simultaneously provide centralized message accounting and billing capability in a multi-protocol communication network environment.

Disclosure of the Invention

According to one aspect, the present invention includes a communications network element that is capable of generally receiving, processing and routing signaling messages between communication

networks that employ differing signaling application protocols. Furthermore, the communications network element, referred to herein as a Multi-Protocol Gateway (MPG) routing node, is adapted to make a routing decision, perform message translation at both the transport protocol suite and signaling protocol levels as required, so as to generally facilitate signaling message transmission to a node in a non-SS7 network. It will be appreciated that herein a transport protocol suite refers to the collection of lower level stack protocols associated with the transport of signaling message packets through a communications network, such as Message Transfer Part (MTP) or Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

It will be further appreciated that herein, a signaling application protocol refers to the particular type of higher level signaling protocol used in a communications network, such as SS7, SIP, H.323, or Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP). The session initiation protocol is defined in SIP: Session Initiation Protocol, RFC 2453, IETF Network Working Group (March 1999), the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. H.323 is defined in ITU Recommendation H.323: Packet Based Multimedia Systems (September 1999), the disclosure of which is incorporated by reference in its entirety. The normalized call control protocol is a protocol used by an SS7/IP gateway for communicating ISUP messages of a given national format to a normalized format for delivery to IP devices and vice versa. The MPG is further configured to update an integrated message accounting and billing system based on certain predetermined message criteria. Once again, it will be appreciated that an MPG routing

node is adapted to make a routing decision, perform message translation at both the transport suite and signaling application protocol levels as required, so as to generally facilitate signaling message transmission to a node in a destination network that does not necessarily employ the same signaling or transport protocol suites as the network from which the message originated. Again, the MPG is further configured to update an integrated message accounting and billing system based on certain pre-determined criteria.

In one embodiment, the MPG routing node includes a communication module or modules capable of transmitting and receiving data packets over MTP, TCP/IP, UDP/IP, and Stream Control Transmission Protocol (SCTP)/IP based networks, wherein these data packets may employ SS7, SIP, H.323, NCCP or similar signaling protocols. The SCTP protocol is a protocol for transferring SS7 messages over an IP network. SCTP is defined in Stream Control Transmission Protocol <draft-ietf-sigtran-sctp-10.txt>, IETF Network Working Group (June 16, 2000), the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

With particular regard to the transmission of SS7 information through TCP/IP type communication networks, the Assignee of the present application has previously disclosed a protocol (Transport Adapter Layer Interface, TALI) that was developed specifically for such an MTP-to-TCP/IP transmission scenario. A detailed description of the TALI protocol may be found in the *TALI 2.0 Technical Reference*, published by Tekelec, Inc. of Calabasas, California (June 2000), the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. The TALI protocol is also described in detail in commonly-assigned, copending U.S. Patent Application No.

09/588,852, filed June 6, 2000, and in Patent Cooperation Treaty Publication No. WO 00/35156, published June 15, 2000, the disclosures of each of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

5 The functions for providing MPG routing and accounting services are described herein as modules or processes. It is understood that these modules or processes may be implemented as computer-executable instructions embodied in a computer-readable medium. Alternatively, the modules or processes described herein may be implemented entirely in hardware. In yet another alternative embodiment, the modules or processes
10 described herein may be implemented as a combination of hardware and software.

The processes and modules for providing MPG routing and accounting services are described below as being associated with cards or subsystems within a routing node. It is understood that these cards or
15 subsystems include hardware for storing and executing the processes and modules. For example, each card or subsystems described below may include one or more microprocessors, such as an x86 or Pentium® microprocessor available from Intel Corporation, and associated memory.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a
20 routing node that facilitates the routing and accounting of messages between a plurality of network elements that do not share a common signaling application protocol.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a routing node that facilitates the accounting and routing of messages between a plurality of
25 network elements that do not share a common transport protocol suite.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a routing node that facilitates the pre-routing translation of a received signaling message employing a first signaling protocol into a second signaling message that employs a Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP).

- 5 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on a particular service requested by the incoming message.

- 10 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on the message type of the incoming message.

- 15 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on an intermediate destination address specified in the message.

- 20 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on an origination or sending address specified in the message.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on calling or called party information specified in the message.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on ownership of a destination network node.

5 It is another object of the present invention to provide a multi-protocol routing and accounting node that is capable of determining the destination and corresponding routing address of a signaling message based, at least in part, on ownership of a network node that originated the message.

10 It is another object of the present invention to provide a routing and accounting node that is capable of receiving signaling messages having different transport protocol suites and signaling application protocols, wherein all messages are addressed to the routing and accounting node, and wherein the routing and accounting node further determines where to route the message and subsequently translates the message into the proper
15 transport protocol suite and signaling protocol necessary for delivery to the destination.

Some of the objects of the invention having been stated hereinabove, other objects will become evident as the description proceeds, when taken in connection with the accompanying drawings as best described hereinbelow.

20

Brief Description of the Drawings

Embodiments of the present invention will now be explained with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a network diagram illustrating a prior art network
25 architecture that employs a first distributed, network specific billing solution;

Figure 2 is a network diagram illustrating a prior art network architecture that employs a second distributed, network specific billing solution;

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of an STP switching node;

5 Figure 4 is a schematic diagram that illustrates an embodiment of a Multi-protocol Gateway (MPG) routing and accounting node of the present invention;

10 Figure 5 is a schematic diagram that illustrates a Multi-protocol Link Interface Module (MLIM) card and a processing flow path associated with an inbound signaling message;

Figure 6a is a table that illustrates a Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD) which includes a Signaling System 7 (SS7) key structure;

Figure 6b is a table that illustrates a Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD) which includes an Internet Protocol (IP) key structure;

15 Figure 7 is a schematic diagram that illustrates a Multi-protocol Link Interface Module (MLIM) card and a processing flow path associated with an outbound signaling message; and

Figure 8 is a table that illustrates a sample Usage and Measurements Database (UMD) structure and data.

20

Detailed Description of the Invention

Disclosed herein are several embodiments of the present invention, all of which include a network element that performs functions similar to that of a traditional telecommunications network packet routing switch, such as a
25 Signal Transfer Point (STP). Each of the embodiments described and

discussed below, employs an internal architecture similar to that of high performance STP and signaling gateway (SG) products which are marketed by the assignee of the present application as the Eagle® STP and IP⁷ Secure Gateway™, respectively. A block diagram that generally illustrates the base internal architecture of the IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ product is shown in Figure 3. A detailed description of the Eagle® STP may be found in the *Eagle® Feature Guide* PN/910-1225-01, Rev. B, January 1998, published by Tekelec, Inc. of Calabasas, California, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Similarly, a detailed description of the IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ may be found in Tekelec publication PN/909-0767-01, Rev B, August 1999, titled *Feature Notice IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ Release 1.0*, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated by reference. The specific functional components of an IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ for transmitting and receiving Transaction Capabilities Application Part (TCAP) messages over an Internet Protocol (IP) network are described in PCT Publication No. WO 00/35155, published June 15, 2000, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety. Similarly, the specific functional components of an IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ for transmitting and receiving ISDN User Part (ISUP) messages over an Internet Protocol (IP) network are described in the above-referenced PCT Publication No. WO 00/35156.

As described in the above referenced *Eagle® Feature Guide*, an Eagle® STP **250** includes the following subsystems: a Maintenance and Administration Subsystem (MAS) **252**, a communication subsystem **254** and an application subsystem **256**. The MAS **252** provides maintenance

communications, initial program load, peripheral services, alarm processing and system disks. The communication subsystem **254** includes an Interprocessor Message Transport (IMT) bus that is the main communication bus among all subsystems in the Eagle[®] STP **250**. This high-speed
5 communications system functions as two 125 Mbps counter-rotating serial buses.

The application subsystem **256** includes application cards that are capable of communicating with the other cards through the IMT buses. Numerous types of application cards can be incorporated into STP **250**,
10 including but not limited to: a Link Interface Module (LIM) **258** that provides SS7 links and X.25 links, a Data Communication Module (DCM) **260** that provides an Internet Protocol (IP) interface using Transmission Control Protocol (TCP), and an Application Service Module (ASM) **262** that provides global title translation, gateway screening and other services. A Translation
15 Service Module (TSM) **264** may also be provided to support local number portability service. While multiple application modules or cards may be simultaneously configured and operatively connected to the IMT bus, it will be appreciated that each card is assigned a unique IMT bus address so as to generally facilitate the internal communication of messages between
20 provisioned application cards that are attached to the bus. Once again, a detailed description of the Eagle[®] STP other than DCM **260** is provided in the above-cited *Eagle[®] Feature Guide* and need not be described in detail herein. DCM **260** is described in detail in one or more of the above-referenced PCT publications.

With particular regard to communication type modules, it should also be appreciated that in a manner similar to conventional SS7 LIM cards, the above mentioned DCM card can be employed to provide for the transport of Internet Protocol (IP) encapsulated SS7 messages over an IP network, as described in the above referenced *Feature Notice IP⁷ Secure Gateway™ Release 1.0* publication. With regard to the TSM module and triggered LNP services mentioned above, a detailed description of the Tekelec triggered LNP solution may be found in the *Feature Guide LNP LSMS* PN/910-1598-01, Rev. A, January 1998, published by Tekelec, Inc. of Calabasas, California, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Furthermore, systems and methods for providing triggerless LNP functionality within a network routing node are described in commonly-assigned, co-pending U.S. Patent Application No. 09/503,541, filed February 14, 2000, the disclosure of which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Shown in Figure 4 is one embodiment of a Multi-Protocol Gateway (MPG) packet routing switch of the present invention, generally indicated by the numeral **300**. MPG **300** is adapted to route message packets between two dissimilar communication networks, and to further provide message accounting and billing services associated with such inter-network routing. As discussed briefly above, MPG routing and accounting node **300** employs an internal architecture that is similar in design and operation to that of an Eagle® STP and an IP⁷ Secure Gateway™. As such, MPG node **300** generally includes an Interprocessor Message Transport (IMT) bus **304** that is the main communication bus among all subsystems in the node. MPG

node further includes a Maintenance and Administration Subsystem (MAS) **302**. Again, MAS **302** provides maintenance communications, initial program load, peripheral services, alarm processing and system disks.

The MPG shown in Figure 4 also includes a pair of MLIM cards, **310** and **350**, and an integrated message accounting and billing subsystem. In the particular embodiment shown, the message accounting and billing subsystem is comprised of a Multi-protocol Accounting Service Module (MASM) **380** and an external Accounting Server Platform (ASP) **400**. From a practical implementation standpoint, ASP **400** could assume the form of a Sun Workstation or similar type computing platform. It will be further appreciated that the entire message accounting and billing subsystem could also be integrated within the MPG switch, such that no significant external computing platform is required.

It will also be appreciated that the MLIM and MASM cards **310**, **350**, and **380**, respectively, are connected via the shared, internal high speed IMT communications bus **304**, and that multiple application cards (e.g., MLIMs, LIMs, DCMs, TSMs, ASMs, etc.) can be simultaneously configured and operatively connected to the IMT bus.

Multi-protocol Link Interface Module (MLIM)

Shown in Figure 5 is one embodiment of a Multi-protocol Link Interface Module (MLIM) card **310** that is configured to transmit, receive, and generally facilitate communication between two communication networks that employ dissimilar signaling and transport protocol suites. MLIM **310** is somewhat similar in function and form to a conventional LIM, as described in

the above referenced Tekelec Eagle and IP⁷ Secure Gateway product and design publications. The MLIM, described herein, expands on the conventional LIM concept so as to provide the additional capability to communicate signaling information between dissimilar networks that utilize a variety of non-SS7 based signaling protocols and non-MTP based transport protocol suites.

In general an MLIM card may be configured to include one or more transport protocol suite processes. In the example illustrated in Figure 5, MLIM card **310** is provisioned to support three transport protocol suite processes: a TCP/IP process **312**, an MTP process **314**, and an SCTP/IP process **316**. Associated with each of the transport protocol suite processes **312**, **314**, and **316** is an input / output (I/O) queue **318**, **320**, and **322**, respectively. It will be appreciated that these lower level protocol process can be configured via hardware, software or firmware to support the physical, data link, network, and transport layers of a variety of transport protocol suites such as MTP, TCP/IP, SCTP/IP, UDP/IP and others. As discussed previously, these lower level transport protocol suite processes are responsible for implementing the functions and services generally associated with OSI levels 1 through 4.

MLIM **310** further includes a Multi-Protocol Routing Process (MPRP) **324**, which is comprised of a Routing and Accounting Manager (RAMG) process **326**, a Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD) process **328**, and a plurality of signaling protocol specific translation processes. More specifically, in the particular example shown in Figure 5, MLIM **310** is provisioned to include a TALI signaling protocol translation process **330**, an

H.323 signaling protocol translation process **332**, an SS7 signaling protocol translation process **334**, a SIP signaling protocol translation process **336**, and an NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338**. It will be appreciated that each of these signaling protocol translation processes is adapted to receive an incoming signaling message that is formatted in a first signaling protocol and subsequently translate the contents of this message into a second signaling protocol. For instance, in the specific example illustrated in Figure 5, an SS7 signaling protocol message is received at MLIM **310** and subsequently delivered to NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338**, where the SS7 formatted message content is parsed and translated into an NCCP formatted signaling protocol message. As discussed above, an NCCP formatted signaling message is a normalized ISUP signaling message used by IP nodes in an IP network.

A discussion of the specific messages translated by protocol translation processes **330**, **332**, **334**, **336**, and **338** is beyond the scope of this disclosure. What is important for purposes of the present invention is that lower layer and upper layer multiprotocol translation functionality, as well as accounting functionality, be located in the same network element or in one or more devices closely-coupled to the same network element. Providing the functions in the same network element greatly facilitates multiprotocol message routing and accounting, as will be discussed in more detail below.

In addition, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the protocol translation processes illustrated in Figure 5. For example, other protocol translation processes, such as M3UA, SUA, M2UA, M2PEER, IUA,

MAP and WAP may be substituted for or included in addition to the processes illustrated in Figure 5 without departing from the scope of the invention.

MLIM **310** also includes an HMDT process **340** that is responsible for
5 the internal distribution of messages that require processing by other subsystems (e.g., accounting and billing, local number portability, calling name delivery, etc.) in the MPG node, and an HMRT process **342** that is responsible for the internal distribution of messages that are being routed or through switched from one MLIM card to another.

10 With particular regard to the Routing and Accounting Manager (RAMG) process **326**, it will be appreciated that RAMG process is adapted to receive incoming signaling messages and determine; (1) whether routing address translation is required, (2) whether transport suite protocol translation is required, (3) whether signaling application protocol translation
15 is required, and (4) whether accounting of the message is required. If message accounting is required, RAMG process **326** is configured so as to produce a new message that is subsequently delivered to an associated accounting & billing subsystem. With particular regard to determining the need for transport suite protocol translation, it will be appreciated that such a
20 need may be indirectly implied with the selection of an outbound communication link, port or socket.

In any event, the above-mentioned four determinations are made with the assistance of an associated Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD) process **328**. As generally indicated in Figures 5a and 5b, MRD process **328**
25 may be comprised of multiple database table structures depending upon the

particular MLIM configuration employed. More particularly, Figure 6a illustrates a sample MRD database structure **600** that might be associated with an MLIM card that is configured to communicate with an SS7 network. Figure 6b illustrates a sample MRD database structure **602** that might be associated with an MLIM card that is configured to communicate with an IP network.

As such, it will be appreciated that if MLIM **310** configured with the MRD database **600** shown in Figure 6a receives an SS7 message destined for a node with an SS7 network address PC: 2-1-1 and SSN: 50, a lookup in the MRD database **600** would subsequently inform the RAMG process **326** that: (1) the appropriate destination address is PC: 2-1-1, SSN: 50 (i.e., no routing address change is necessary); (2) the appropriate destination address requires an SS7 formatted message (i.e., no transport suite or signaling protocol translation is necessary); and (3) the accounting subsystem should not be notified (i.e., no accounting of this message is necessary). Consequently, in this example scenario, the received SS7 signaling message would simply be routed or through switched.

However, it will be appreciated that if MLIM **310** configured with the MRD database **602** shown in Figure 6a receives an SS7 message destined for an SS7 network address PC: 1-1-1, a lookup in the MRD database **602** would inform the RAMG process **326** that: (1) the appropriate destination address is an IP socket comprised of an IP address, 102.20.20.10, and an IP port 22; (2) the appropriate destination address requires an NCCP formatted message; and (3) the accounting subsystem should be notified. Consequently, the received SS7 signaling message would be passed from

the RAMG process **326** to the NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338**.

NCCP translation process **338** would subsequently examine the information content of the original SS7 message and generate an equivalent
5 NCCP-formatted message, as per a pre-determined set of SS7-to-NCCP inter-protocol message type conversion rules. Such inter-protocol message type conversion rules might include, for example, instructions or rules for creating the NCCP equivalent of an ANSI ISUP IAM message. Furthermore, such conversion rules could include instructions for creating the NCCP
10 equivalent of an 800 number, local number portability (LNP), or calling name (CNAM) SS7 TCAP query message.

It will be appreciated from Figures 4, 5, and 6a, that once processing is completed NCCP translation process **338** passes the translated message on to HMRT process **342** for internal routing to the appropriate outbound IP-
15 configured MLIM card that maintains TCP or UDP socket 1, with a corresponding IP address: 102.20.20.10, port 22. In the particular example present herein, TCP or UDP socket 1 has been established and is maintained on MLIM **350**, and MLIM **350** has been assigned an IMT bus address identifier of **2201**. As such the NCCP formatted message is
20 internally routed to the outbound MLIM **350** and transport level protocol suite translation is effectively performed by the NCCP – TCP/IP socket process **354**, as indicated in Figure 7. In general, the outbound socket process is adapted to provide and apply the proper lower level transport protocol suite to the outbound signaling message so as to effectively prepare the outbound
25 signaling message for transmission through the destination network.

It will be further appreciated that an incoming message could be translated or converted based on a domain name (DN) or an email address type identifier, as generally indicated in database table **602** (Figure 6b). As mentioned previously, it is also possible to translate from any one of the industry standard signaling protocols (e.g., SS7, SIP, H.323, etc.) to a normalized signaling protocol. Such a normalized protocol could be any protocol adapted to facilitate efficient translation of signaling information and to further provide a universal signaling protocol that can be easily utilized by nodes that are required to provide service to a variety of signaling networks.

With particular regard to the message accounting and billing functionality of the MPG routing node **300**, it will be appreciated that in one embodiment of the present invention, RAMG process **326** formulates an accounting message, related to a received signaling message, and passes this accounting message on to the HMDT process **340** for subsequent delivery to and processing by the MASM module **380**, as generally indicated in Figure 4. It will be appreciated that the accounting message could simply be a copy of the original received signaling message, or the accounting message could be of a message type associated specifically with the accounting subsystem. In a preferred embodiment, a normalized accounting message (NAM) format is employed that is analogous to the NCCP signaling protocol concept. That is, a NAM formatted accounting message employs a field or record structure that is essentially a superset of all parameters of interest from all signaling protocols of interest. As such, parameters of interest in a SIP formatted signaling message can be easily accommodated in a NAM accounting message, as can parameters of interest in an SS7

formatted signaling message. It will be appreciated that, in one embodiment, a NAM accounting message can be encapsulated within an SCCP packet prior to internal routing within the MPG node. Such SCCP encapsulation can be performed by a RAMG process. It will be further appreciated that the NAM format can be periodically expanded (or revised) to accommodate new or evolving signaling protocols that must be supported by an MPG node. In any event, the accounting subsystem is notified of the receipt of the incoming message.

10

Message Accounting Subsystem

In the embodiment illustrated in Figure 4, MPG node **300** includes a message accounting and billing subsystem that is comprised of an internal MASM card **380**, and an external ASP accounting server platform **400**. It will be appreciated the combination of MASM card **380** and ASP accounting server **400** includes the database and control processes necessary to achieve the accounting and billing functionality of the present invention. Again, it should also be appreciated that the entire message accounting subsystem could also be integrated completely within the MPG node.

The MASM card **380** shown in Figure 4 includes a Signaling Connection Control Part (SCCP) subsystem **382** that is responsible for receiving and preliminary processing of incoming SCCP encapsulated accounting message packets. MASM card **380** also includes an SCCP controller known as a Signaling Connection Routing Controller (SCRC) process **384** and a high-speed Ethernet Controller (EC) process **386**. Once again, as described above, the SCCP subsystem **382** is responsible for

receiving and preliminary processing of incoming SCCP encapsulated message packets, while the SCRC process **384** is responsible for discrimination and subsequent distribution of messages based on information contained in an SCCP packet. In the case of MASM card **380**,
5 messages that satisfy the SCRC discrimination criteria are distributed or directed to the high-speed Ethernet Controller process **386**. EC process **386** is in turn responsible for controlling the process of communicating messages, via an Ethernet connection to and from the associated ASP server **400**. More particularly, ASP server **400** includes a corresponding
10 high-speed Ethernet Controller process **402** that serves as the communications interface between MASM card **380** and an on-board Accounting Server Manager (ASM) process **404**. ASM process **404** is responsible for the de-capsulation or removal of the SCCP envelope that contains the accounting message. The de-capsulated accounting message
15 is then passed to an adjacent Usage and Measurements process **406** where usage and measurement statistics are created and stored in a Usage and Measurements Database (UMD) **410**, such as that shown in Figure 8.

Usage and measurements statistics produced by such a process could include, but are not limited to, peg counts of messages received from a
20 specific network address, a specific service provider, a specific service user, a specific IP socket, or a specific signaling link. As shown in sample UMD **410**, each "call" or communication is identified by a call ID, and certain predetermined information associated with a "call" or communication can be stored in the database. It will be appreciated that the information contained

in a UMD database could be significantly more or less detailed than that indicated in the example shown in Figure 8.

In any event, such statistics could include information associated with the time-of-day that a message was received, the duration of a “call” or communication, general quality of service (QoS) indicators associated with a “call” or communication, information related to or identifying the type of service that is associated with a “call” or communication (i.e., broadband service related, call setup related, database query related, etc.). Such usage information could be used to bill a subscriber at different rates depending upon the type of service requested. For instance, a subscriber could be billed at one rate for a “call” or communication related to the downloading of a movie from a video server, and a different rate for a “call” associated with a real-time video – telephone conference. With such capability included within an MPG routing node, network operators greatly increased flexibility with regard to service-specific billing, without significantly increasing network OA&M requirements.

In order to facilitate such billing operations, ASP server **400** also includes a billing process **408** that is adapted to extract information stored by the Usage and Measurements process **406** and subsequently generate bills. Once again, information or parameters maintained by process **406** that may be used in the generation of bills could include, but is not limited to, a network address identifier, a service provider identifier, a service user identifier, an IP socket identifier, a signaling link identifier, and a service type identifier. It will be further appreciated that a network address identifier could include, but is not limited to a destination or origination SS7 point code, a

destination or origination IP address, and a destination or origination domain name. Similarly, a user identifier could include, but is not limited to a calling or called party telephone number, and a destination or origination email address.

5 Furthermore, in the particular embodiment shown, copies of incoming signaling messages that require accounting service are encapsulated within an SCCP packet and subsequently internally routed to MASM 380. It should be appreciated that SCCP encapsulation is not essential to the operation of the message accounting subsystem of the present invention. Other internal
10 encapsulating protocols could be just as easily employed, provided that a suitably provisioned MASM module is capable of receiving and processing the encapsulated messages. In fact, no encapsulation necessarily need be performed, so long as the accounting message generated by a RAMG type process can be received and generally processed by a suitable configured
15 MASM module.

Multi-Protocol Gateway (MPG) Operation

In the example configuration shown in Figure 4, a first MLIM 310 is configured to communicate with an SS7-MTP network 500, while a second
20 MLIM 350 is configured to communicate with an NCCP-TCP/IP network 502. As generally indicated in Figure 4, a first message is received by the first MLIM card 310 via an SS7-MTP Port process 314, herein identified by a Port ID of 3. It will be appreciated that MLIM card 310 has been assigned an internal IMT bus address identifier of 4101. As indicated in Figure 4, it is
25 assumed that the first message was sent from a node 504 residing in the

SS7 network **500**. Furthermore, node **504** is identified within the SS7 network by a point code (PC) value of 2-1-1, while the first message is addressed to a destination point code (DPC) value of 1-1-1. Lower level transport protocol suite processing is performed on the incoming first message by Port process **314**, and the first message is subsequently passed to an associated I/O queue **320**. Following buffering in the I/O queue **320**, the first message is passed to the RAMG process **326**. RAMG process **326** identifies the first message as having arrived via Port process **314**, and directs a lookup in MRD database process **328** based on information contained in or associated with the first message.

According to the sample routing rules provided in Figure 6a, an incoming message that is addressed to a DPC value of 1-1-1 will be subsequently routed to a network element having an IP address of 102.20.20.10, port 22. In this example, MLIM **350** has been assigned an IMT bus address of 2201, and as indicated in Figure 6a, a connection or socket to this IP address has been established and is being maintained on the MLIM card having an IMT bus address of 2201. More specifically, a TCP/IP socket having a socket ID of 1 has been established on MLIM **350**. As further indicated in Figure 6a, the signaling protocol translation rule associated with the first message indicates the need to translate the received signaling message to an NCCP protocol prior to routing. Consequently, RAMG process **326** passes the first message to NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338** along with information returned by the MRD database lookup operation. NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338** receives the first message and performs the SS7 to NCCP

translation or mapping operation, thereby effectively creating a second, functionally equivalent NCCP formatted signaling message.

As generally indicated in Figure 5, the second NCCP formatted message is subsequently passed from the NCCP signaling protocol translation process **338** to HMRT process **342**. HMRT process **342** identifies the destination MLIM card corresponding to IMT bus address 2201, and places the second signaling message on the IMT bus **304**. The second message is then received by the MLIM card **350**, and essentially directed to the outbound I/O queue **352** associated with the destination TCP/IP socket process **354**. Socket process **354** next receives the NCCP formatted signaling message and constructs or appends the appropriate lower level transport protocol suite required to facilitate transmission to the destination node through TCP/IP based network **502**. With lower level transport protocol suite processing complete, the NCCP formatted signaling message is transmitted into the TCP/IP based network **502**, as generally indicated in Figure 4.

Returning to Figure 5, it will be appreciated that following the MRD database lookup operation described above, RAMG process **326** is adapted to generate a NAM formatted accounting message that is associated with the first signaling message. This accounting message is produced in response to the instructions returned by the MRD process **328**, indicating that message accounting service is required for the first signaling message. In the embodiment of the present invention presented herein, the accounting message assumes the form of a NAM message that is essentially encapsulated within an SCCP formatted packet. This SCCP encapsulated

message is subsequently directed to HMDT process **340**, which in turn directs the SCCP encapsulated accounting message to MASM card **380** via IMT bus **304**.

Once again, although an SCCP formatted accounting message is indicated in the particular embodiment shown in Figure 4 and described herein, it should be appreciated that the message directed to accounting subsystem need not be of an SCCP format. Other message formats could be employed, so long as the MASM card(s) were configured to receive and process the chosen account message format.

The encapsulated accounting message is received and processed by SCCP process **382** that is resident on MASM card **380**, so as to verify and generally validate the SCCP packet prior to further processing. The SCCP packet is next passed to the SCRC process **384**, which is responsible for discrimination and subsequent distribution of messages based on information contained in the SCCP packet. Messages that satisfy the SCRC discrimination criteria are distributed or directed to the high-speed Ethernet Controller (EC) process **386**. EC process **386** in turn communicates the SCCP message, via an Ethernet connection to the associated ASP server **400**.

As such, the SCCP encapsulated accounting message is received by a corresponding EC process **402** and subsequently passed to the Accounting Services Manager (ASM) process **404**. ASM process **404** examines the received accounting message, removes the SCCP encapsulating layer and extracts the information from the NAM formatted accounting message according to a pre-determined set of usage and

measurement rules. This usage and measurement information is then provided to the Usage and Measurements process **406** for analysis and storage. Billing information may be generated by the accounting subsystem via the billing process **408**. Billing process **408** extracts information from the

5 Usage and Measurements process **406** and applies a set of pre-determined billing rate rules, so as to effectively generate invoices or bills indicating costs associated with various aspects of communication services.

Other accounting services might include but are not limited to usage and measurements service, fraud detection service, and network

10 management service. Although not explicitly shown, it will be appreciated that the external accounting server includes a user interface that provides a user-friendly method of extracting and utilizing the various accounting services data once it is collected.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. A network routing element capable of receiving, from a first communication network, a first message formatted according to a first transport protocol suite containing information that is formatted according to a first signaling protocol, and subsequently generating a second message formatted according to a second transport protocol suite containing information that is formatted in a second signaling protocol and transmitting the second message to a second communication network, the network element comprising:
- 10
- 15 (a) a first communication module capable of receiving, from a first communication network, a first message formatted according to a first transport protocol suite and containing information that is formatted according to a first signaling protocol;
- 20 (b) a second communication module capable of transmitting, to a second communication network, a second message formatted according to a second transport protocol suite containing information that is formatted according to a second signaling protocol;
- 25 (c) a Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD) for storing protocol translation and routing information;
- (d) a multi-protocol routing process for extracting information from the MRD and subsequently directing

the first signaling message to a translation process based on the information; and

- (e) a transport protocol suite process for receiving a second signaling message from the multi-protocol translation process based on the first signaling message and for applying a second transport protocol suite and associated routing instructions to the second signaling message.

5

10

2. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Signaling System 7 (SS7) signaling protocol.

15

3. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) signaling protocol.

20

4. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first signaling protocol is an H.323 signaling protocol.
5. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP) signaling protocol.

6. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second signaling protocol is an SS7 signaling protocol.
- 5 7. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second signaling protocol is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) signaling protocol.
8. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second signaling protocol is an H.323 signaling protocol.
- 10 9. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second signaling protocol is a Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP) signaling protocol.
- 15 10. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes the Message Transfer Part (MTP) of the SS7 protocol.
- 20 11. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).
- 25 12. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes Simple Control Transmission Protocol / Internet Protocol (SCTP/IP).

13. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes Message Transfer Part (MTP) of the SS7 protocol.

5

14. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

10

15. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes Simple Control Transmission Protocol / Internet Protocol (SCTP/IP).

15

16. The network routing element of claim 1 including a message accounting subsystem (MAS) for generating and maintaining usage and measurements and billing type information associated with the messages that are processed and routed through the routing element.

20

17. The network routing element of claim 16 wherein the MAS is located within and integral with the network routing element.

18. The network routing element of claim 16 wherein the MAS is configured as an external database platform.

25

19. The network routing element of claim 18 wherein the external MAS platform is connected to the network routing element via a high-speed Ethernet link.
- 5 20. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD includes message accounting subsystem (MAS) processing instructions.
- 10 21. The network routing element of claim 16 wherein the MAS is configured to receive a copy of the first signaling message.
- 15 22. The network routing element of claim 16 wherein the MAS is configured to receive a Normalized Accounting Message (NAM) message that is based on information contained in the first message.
- 20 23. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD protocol translation instructions include signaling protocol translation instructions.
24. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD is indexed by IP Host and Port values.
- 25 25. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD is indexed by Socket values.

26. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD is indexed by Point Code (PC) values.

5 27. The network routing element of claim 1 wherein the MRD is indexed by Called Party Address (CdPA) values.

28. The network routing element of claim 27 wherein the CdPA value is a telephone number.

10 29. The network routing element of claim 27 wherein the CdPA value is an Internet Domain Name (DN).

15 30. The network routing element of claim 27 wherein the CdPA value is an Internet email address.

31. A method for routing signaling messages between networks with differing signaling protocols and differing transport protocol suites, the method comprising:

- 20
- (a) receiving, from a first communications network that employs a first transport protocol suite, a first signaling message formatted according to a first signaling protocol;
 - (b) determining where to route the first message;

- (c) determining whether the first message requires a signaling protocol translation;
- (d) in response to determining that the first message requires a signaling protocol translation, directing the first message to a signaling protocol translation process for translation into an equivalent second message that is formatted in a second signaling protocol;
- (e) applying a second transport protocol suite to the second message; and
- (f) transmitting the second message into a second communication network.

32. The method of claim 31 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Signaling System 7 (SS7) signaling protocol.

33. The method of claim 31 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) signaling protocol.

34. The method of claim 31 wherein the first signaling protocol is an H.323 signaling protocol.

35. The method of claim 31 wherein the first signaling protocol is a Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP) signaling protocol.

36. The method of claim 31 wherein the second signaling protocol is an SS7 signaling protocol.

37. The method of claim 31 wherein the second signaling protocol is a Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) signaling protocol.

38. The method of claim 31 wherein the second signaling protocol is an H.323 signaling protocol.

39. The method of claim 31 wherein the second signaling protocol is a Normalized Call Control Protocol (NCCP) signaling protocol.

40. The method of claim 31 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes the Message Transport Part (MTP) of the SS7 signaling protocol.

41. The method of claim 31 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

42. The method of claim 31 wherein the first transport protocol suite includes Simple Control Transmission Protocol / Internet Protocol (SCTP/IP).

43. The method of claim 31 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes the Message Transport Part (MTP) of the SS7 protocol.

5 44. The method of claim 31 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes Transmission Control Protocol / Internet Protocol (TCP/IP).

10 45. The method of claim 31 wherein the second transport protocol suite includes Simple Control Transmission Protocol / Internet Protocol (SCTP/IP).

15 46. The method of claim 31 wherein determining where to route the first message includes examining routing rules that are stored in a multiprotocol routing database (MRD).

20 47. The method of claim 31 wherein determining whether the first message requires signaling protocol translation includes signaling protocol translation rules that are stored in a Multi-protocol Routing Database (MRD).

48. The method of claim 31 comprising determining whether message accounting service is required.

49. The method of claim 48 comprising, in response to determining that message accounting service is required, sending a third message to a message accounting subsystem.

5 50. The method of claim 49 wherein the third message is a copy of the first message.

10 51. The method of claim 49 wherein the third message is a Normalized Accounting Message (NAM) message that is based on information contained in the first message.

15 52. The method of claim 48 wherein determining whether message accounting service is required includes examining message accounting service rules that are stored in a MRD.

20 53. The method of claim 31 wherein applying the second transport protocol suite includes applying the second transport protocol suite at an outbound Multi-Protocol Link Interface Module (MLIM).

54. A computer program product comprising computer-executable instructions embodied in a computer-readable medium for performing steps comprising:

- (a) receiving a first message formatted according to a first transport protocol suite and containing information formatted according to a first signaling protocol;
- (b) performing a lookup in a multiprotocol routing database to determine protocol translation instructions for the first message;
- (c) directing the first message to a translation process for generating a second message formatted according to second signaling protocol based on results from the lookup in the multiprotocol routing database;
- (d) applying a second transport protocol suite to the second message; and
- (e) transmitting the second message over a second network.

55. The computer program product of claim 54 wherein performing a lookup in the multiprotocol routing database includes determining whether accounting is required for the first message

56. The computer program product of claim 55 comprising, in response to determining that accounting is required for the first message, formulating a normalized accounting message based on the accounting instructions.

57. The computer program product of claim 56 comprising routing the normalized accounting message to an accounting subsystem.

5 58. The computer program product of claim 54 wherein performing a lookup in the multiprotocol routing database includes performing the lookup using a point code contained in the first message.

10 59. The computer program product of claim 54 wherein performing a lookup in the multiprotocol routing database includes performing the lookup using a called party address contained in the first message.

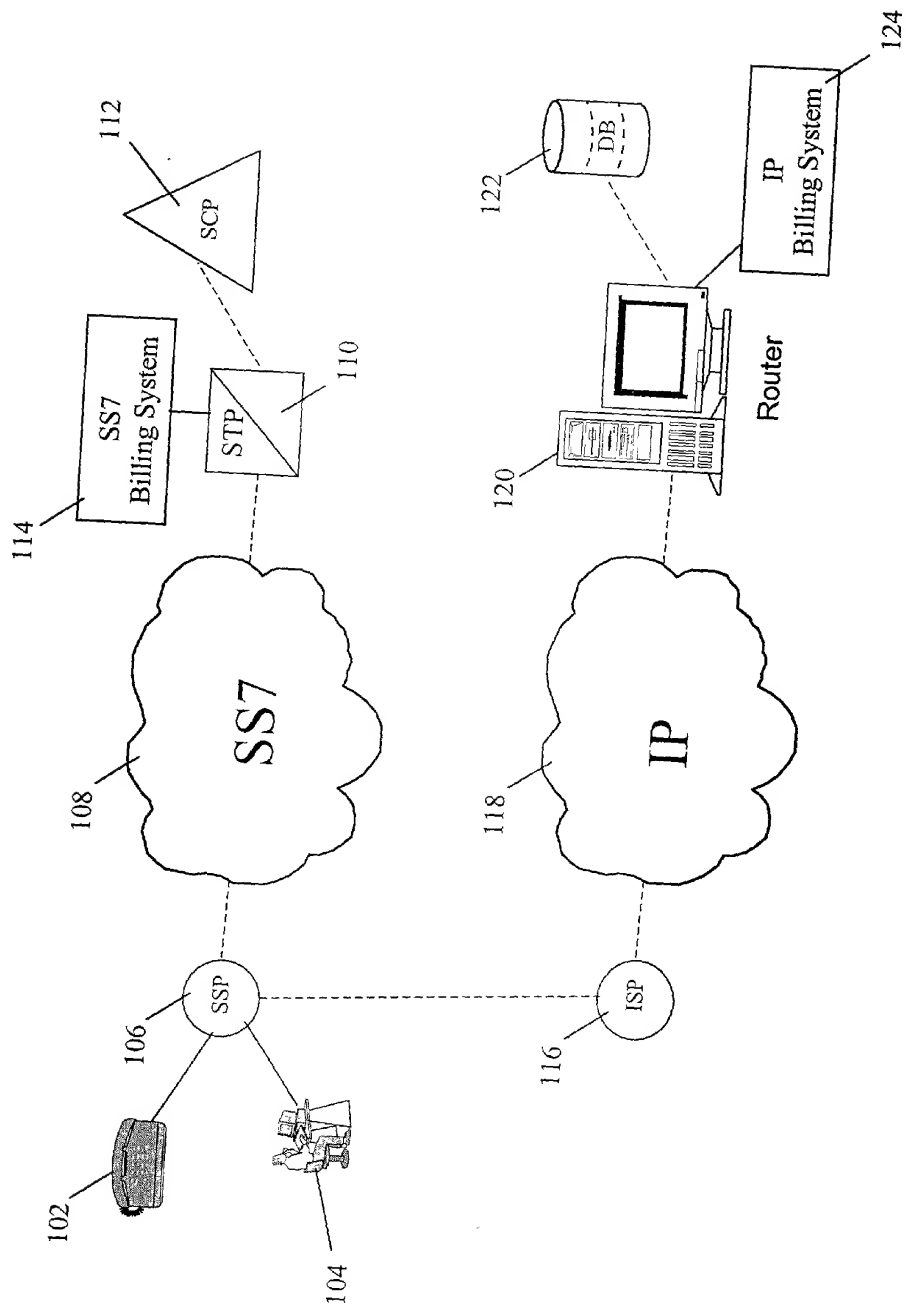
15 60. The computer program product of claim 54 wherein performing a lookup in the multiprotocol routing database includes performing the lookup using an IP address contained in the first message.

20 61. The computer program product of claim 54 wherein performing a lookup in the multiprotocol routing database includes performing the lookup using a domain name contained in the first message.

Abstract of the Disclosure

A network element that is capable facilitating the routing and accounting of messages between a plurality of network elements that do not share a common signaling application protocol nor a common transport protocol suite. In one embodiment of the present invention, a Multi-Protocol Gateway (MPG) is adapted to receive a signaling message and subsequently translate both the signaling and transport protocol suite prior to message routing. The MPG node is also configured to create and maintain usage and measurements data that may subsequently be used to produce billing records.

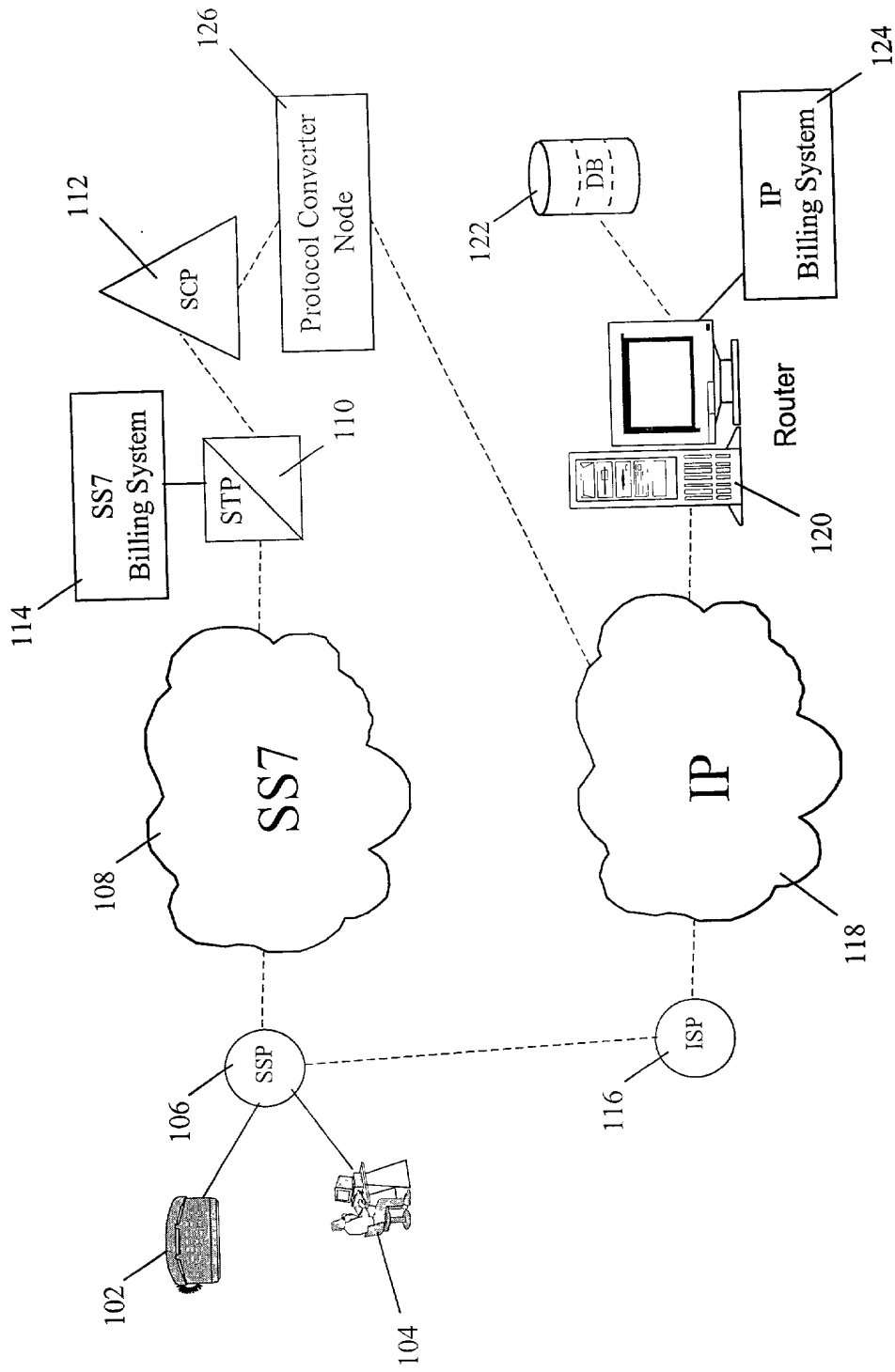
100 →



PRIOR ART

Figure 1

130 →



PRIOR ART

Figure 2

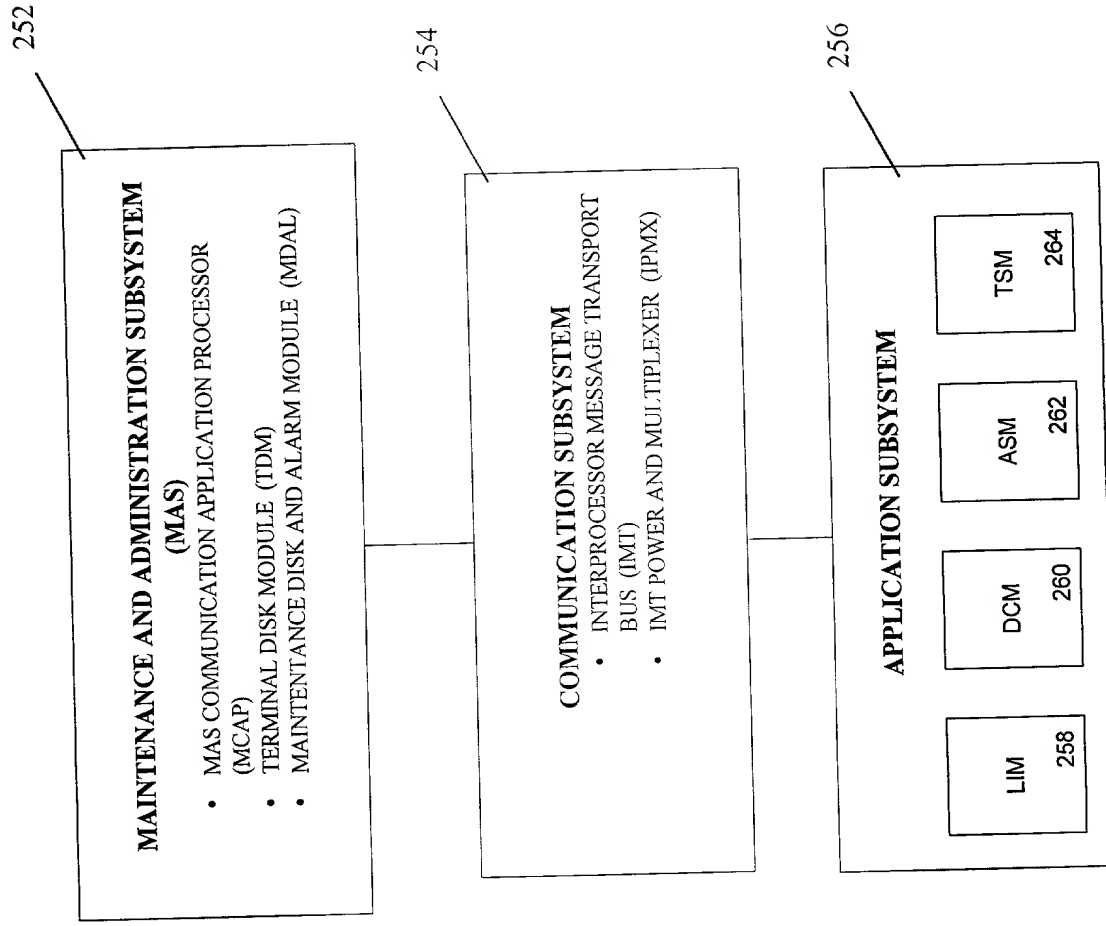


Figure 3

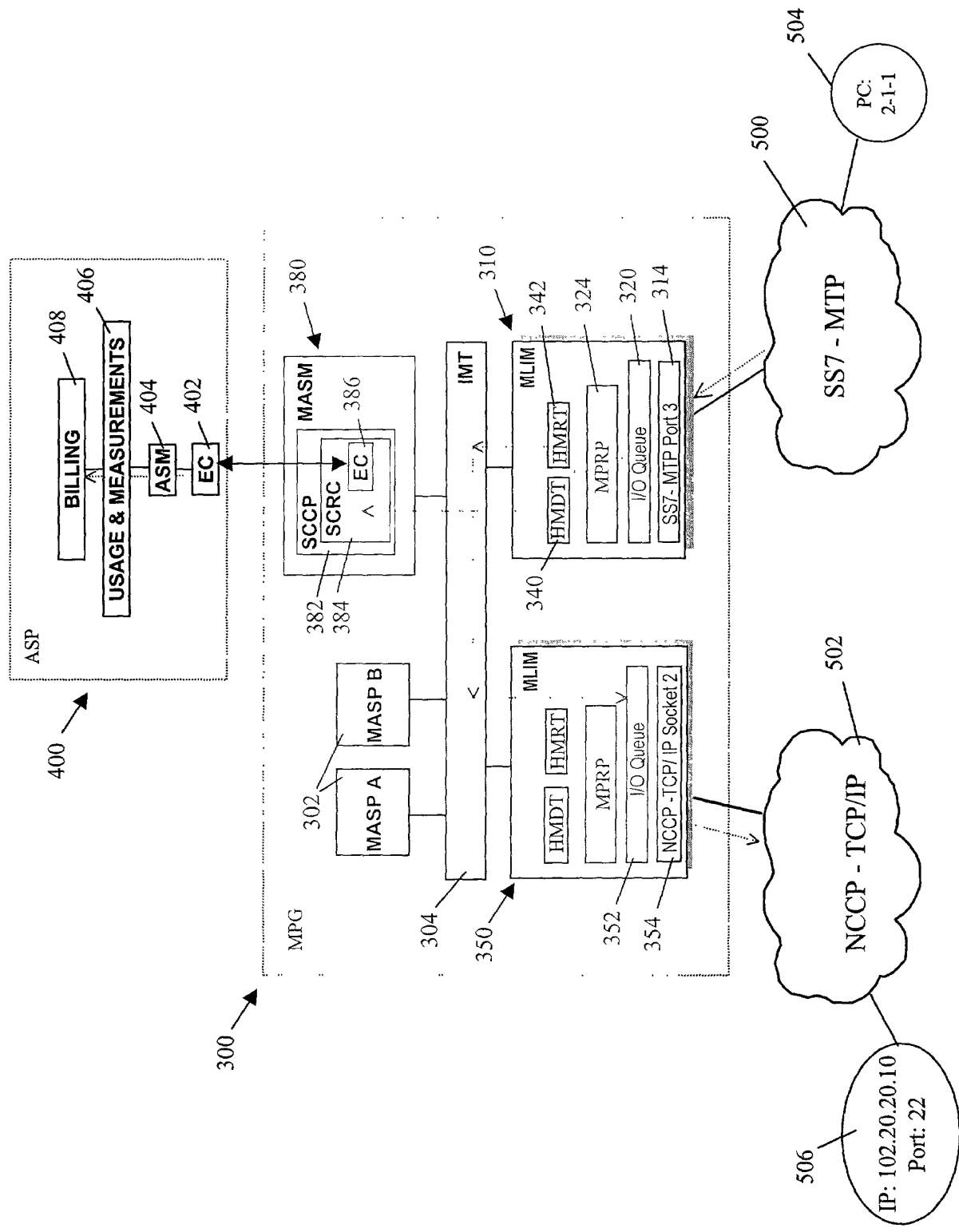


Figure 4

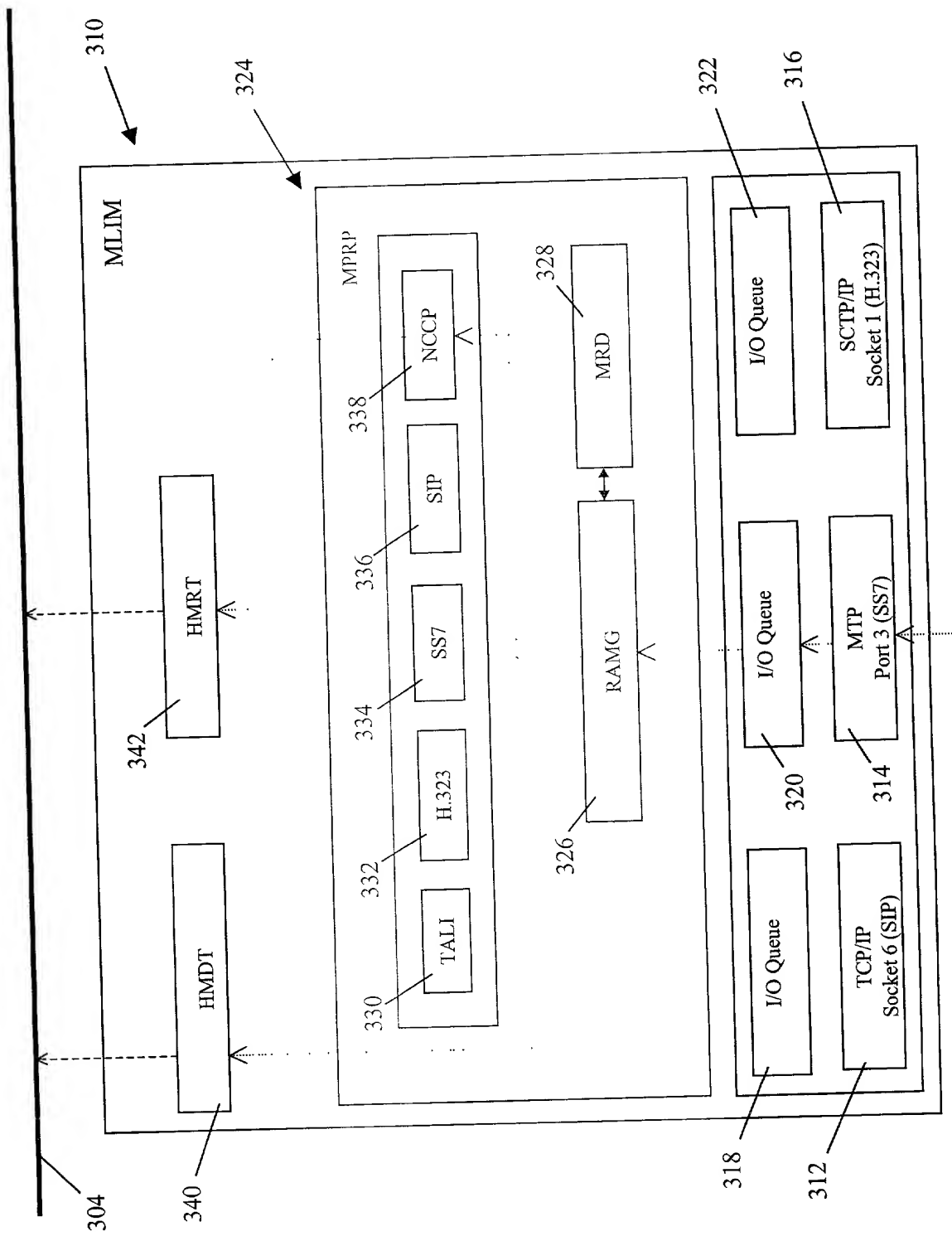


Figure 5

MRD DATABASE									
SS7 Keys					DATA FIELDS				
Key 1	Key 2				Signaling Protocol	PC/ IP Add.	SSN/ Port	Acct.	Outbound Socket/Port
DPC SSN	CdPA				SS7	2-1-1	50	No	2201
2-1-1 50	*				SS7	102.20.20.10	22	Yes	2201
1-1-1 *	*				NCCP	102.20.20.12	20	Yes	2201
* *	9194605555				SIP	104.20.10.10	30	No	2102
2-1-1 78	*				NCCP	uswest.cnam1	*	Yes	4101
2-1-2 *	*				H.323	103.23.23.10	45	Yes	3306
3-1-1 *	*				SS7				

Figure 6a

600

602

MRD DATABASE									
IP Keys					DATA FIELDS				
Key 3		Key 4			Signaling Protocol	PC/ IP Add.	SSN/ Port	Acct.	Outbound Socket/Port
Host	Port	CdPA			SS7	2-1-1	50	No	4201
101.10.10.25	23	*			SS7	2-1-1	50	No	4101
101.10.10.35	34	*			SS7	2-1-1	20	Yes	4301
* *	*	jsmith@aol.com			SIP	101.50.50.10	45	Yes	4101
102.20.20.10	25	*			H.323	102.20.20.10	23	Yes	3108
102.20.20.10	23	*			NCCP	103.30.30.10	24	No	3402
103.30.30.10	24	Retailer.com			SIP	104.40.50.10	34	Yes	3301

Figure 6b

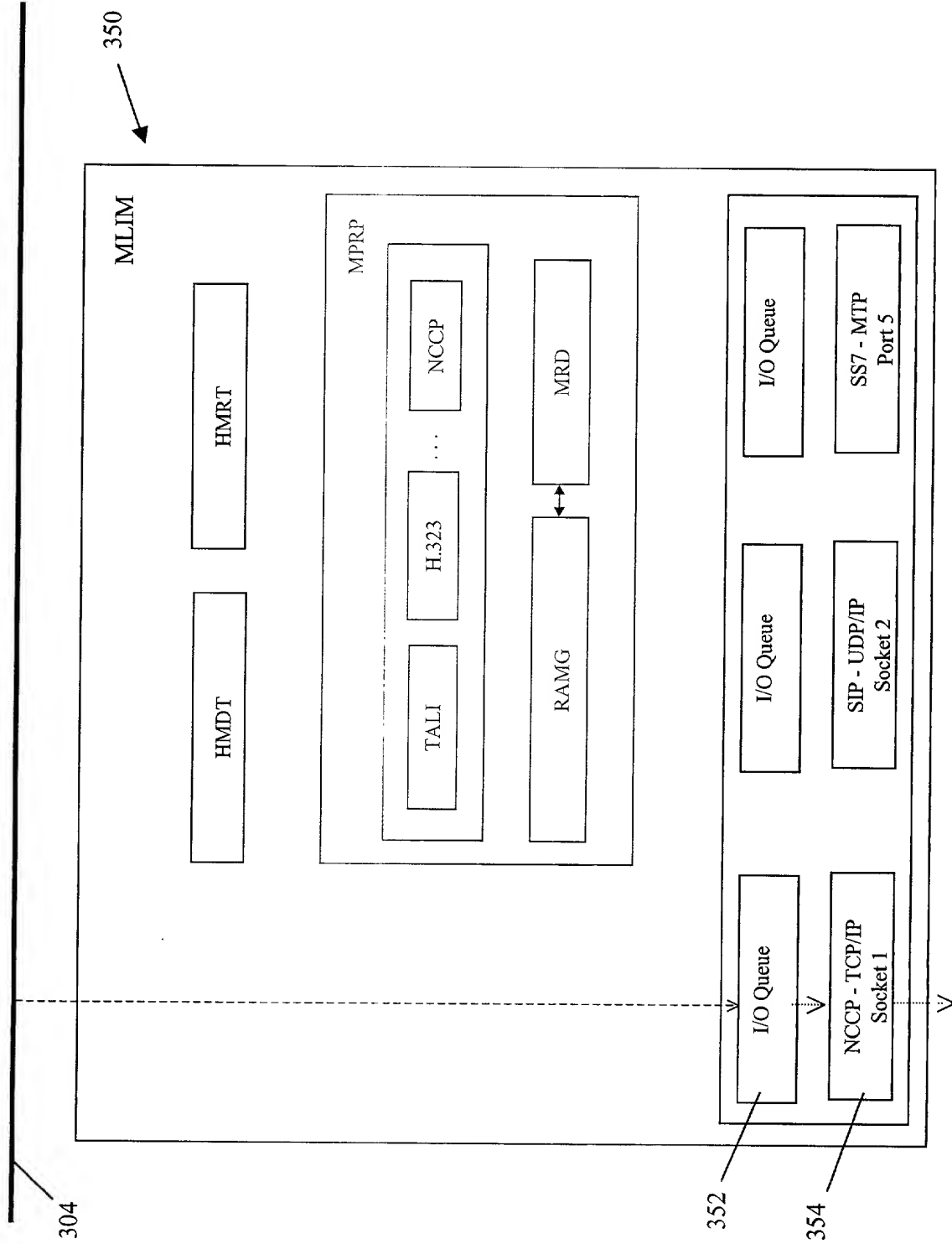


Figure 7

USAGE & MEASUREMENTS DATABASE									
Keys		DATA FIELDS							
Call ID	Time	Service Provider	Service Recipient	Service Type	CdPA	PC/IP Add.	SSN/Port	Originating	
1025	23:12.23	12	34	01	jsmith@aol.com	2-1-1	50		
1534	23:34.01	23	13	01	9194605500	102.20.20.10	23		
1632	23:36.59	12	15	03	Retailer.com	103.30.30.10	24		

Figure 8

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PTO/SB/01 (12-97)

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**DECLARATION FOR UTILITY OR
DESIGN
PATENT APPLICATION
(37 CFR 1.63)**☒ Declaration
Submitted
with Initial
Filing
OR
☐ Declaration
Submitted after Initial
Filing (surcharge
(37 CFR 1.16 (e))
required)

Attorney Docket Number	1322/47
First Named Inventor	Robert John Tinsley
COMPLETE IF KNOWN	
Application Number	Not Assigned
Filing Date	Not Assigned
Group Art Unit	Not Assigned
Examiner Name	Not Assigned

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address, and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled:

**METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR PROVIDING MESSAGE TRANSLATION, ACCOUNTING AND
ROUTING SERVICE IN A MULTI-PROTOCOL COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK ENVIRONMENT**

the specification of which (Title of the invention)

☒ is attached hereto
OR☐ was filed on (MM/DD/YYYY) [] as United States Application Number or PCT International

Application Number [] and was amended on (MM/DD/YYYY) [] (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment specifically referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR 1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d) or 356(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 356(e) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States or America, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate, or of any PCT international application having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed.

Prior Foreign Application Number(s)	Country	Foreign Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Priority Not Claimed	Certified Copy Attached?	
				YES	NO
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

☐ Additional foreign application numbers are listed on a supplemental priority data sheet PTO/SB/02B attached hereto.

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below.

Application Number(s)	Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	<input type="checkbox"/> Additional provisional application numbers are listed on a supplemental priority data sheet PTO/SB/02B attached hereto.

(Page 1 of 2)

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DECLARATION — Utility or Design Patent Application

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 120 of any United States application(s), or 365(c) of any PCT international application designating the United States of America, listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States or PCT international application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to patentability as defined in 37 CFR 1.56 which became available between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

U.S. Parent Application or PCT Parent Number	Parent Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Parent Patent Number (if applicable)

☐ Additional U.S. or PCT international application numbers are listed on a supplemental priority data sheet PTO/SB/02C attached hereto.

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following registered practitioner(s) to prosecute this application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith: ☐ Customer Number OR ☒ Registered practitioner(s) name/registration number listed below

Place Customer Number Bar Code Label Here

Name	Registration Number	Name	Registration Number
Richard E. Jenkins	28,428	Jennifer L. Skord	30,687
Jeffrey L. Wilson	36,058	Gregory A. Hunt	41,085
Aries A. Taylor, Jr.	39,395	David P. Gloekler	41,037

☐ Additional registered practitioner(s) named on supplemental Registered Practitioner Information sheet PTO/SB/02C attached hereto.

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I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under 18 U.S.C. 1001 and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application of any patent issued thereon.

Name of Sole or First Inventor: ☐ A petition has been filed for this unsigned inventor

Given Name (first and middle (if any))		Family Name or Surname	
Robert John		Tinsley	
Inventor's Signature	<i>Robert John Tinsley</i>	Date	7/17/00
Residence: City	Durham	State	NC
Country	USA	Citizenship	USA
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City	Durham	State	NC
Country	USA	ZIP	27712

☒ Additional inventors are being named on the 1 supplemental Additional Inventor(s) sheet(s) PTO/SB/02A attached hereto

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PTC/SS/02A (3-87)
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DECLARATION

ADDITIONAL INVENTOR(S)

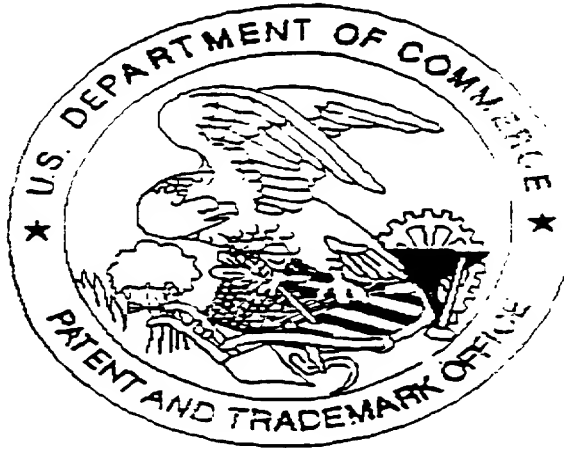
Supplemental Sheet

Page 1 of 1

Name of Additional Joint Inventor, if any:		<input type="checkbox"/> A petition has been filed for this unsigned inventor			
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Peter Joseph		Marsico			
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Country	USA				
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Inventor's Signature	<i>David Michael Sprague</i>			Date	7/18/2000
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Country	USA				
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Given Name (first and middle (if any))		Family Name or Surname			
Inventor's Signature				Date	
Residence: City		State		Country	
Post Office Address					
Post Office Address					
City		State		ZIP	
Country					

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